

# The Impact of Brand Experience on Repurchase Intention: Exploring the Roles of Mediation and Moderation in Thai Skin Care Market

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## Abstract

This study examines consumer repurchase behavior in the Thai skin care market, emphasizing the roles of brand experience, brand love, social identity, and reference groups. This study involved 400 Thai skincare consumers and employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the relationships, specifically the mediating effects of brand love and social identity between brand experience and repurchase intention. The results revealed that brand love and social identity positively mediate the relationship between brand experience and repurchase intention, while reference groups do not mediate this connection. Overall, the findings underscore the significance of brand engagement in shaping social factors and emphasize that effective advertising influences initial purchases but not enduring loyalty. Lastly, this study offers insights into future research directions and managerial implications for both scholars and managers.

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**Keywords:** Brand Experience, Repurchase Intention, Brand Love, Social Identity, Reference Group

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## Introduction

The Thai skincare market is experiencing rapid expansion from Korean beauty trends (Park et al., 2022). Influenced by Korean influencers and social media, Korean beauty standards have become the ideal among Thai consumers, fueling demand for Korean skincare routines and

innovative products. This demand shift compels Thai cosmetic companies to adapt by integrating Korean-inspired products and branding strategies. However, this trend presents challenges for Thai cosmetic branding in competing with imported Korean products (Oe & Yamaoka, 2022), elevating the significance of brand research within this

domain. To resonate with Thai consumers, brands must develop robust identities and marketing strategies, emphasizing a deep understanding of cultural nuances that influence consumer preferences. This approach will help them to differentiate themselves and effectively navigate the local market.

Scholars and practitioners are collaborating to understand the determinants of consumer behavior to secure a competitive edge (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021; Kootenaie & Kootenaie, 2021), explore new markets (Mal & Davies, 2023; Sarasvuo et al., 2022), and fine-tune strategies aligning with market dynamics (Shahid et al., 2022; Mehta et al., 2020). In essence, effective brand research equips companies to hone unique selling points, curate targeted marketing approaches, and forge deeper connections with consumers (Shahid et al., 2022). Obviously, a profound understanding of consumer behavior allows companies to better engage their audience (Shao et al., 2019) and create brand experiences that drive loyalty, satisfaction, and repurchase intention (Safeer et al., 2021).

To elaborate more, brand experience encompasses all interactions a consumer has with a brand, including advertising, packaging, design, retail environment, and service (Brakus et al., 2009). These touchpoints engage consumers on an emotional level, fostering a strong connection between the consumer and the brand (Brakus et al., 2009). In relation to this, previous studies have also found that a positive brand experience can promote satisfaction and loyalty, while a negative experience may lead to decreased satisfaction and a reduced intention to repurchase (Özkan et al., 2020). Hence, in examining repurchase intention, it is

essential to examine the mediating and moderating effects of social and personal factors. This is because self-concept, as established by Sirgy (1982), plays a pivotal role in consumer behavior, as individuals seek to maintain a positive self-image through their consumption choices. Overall, while previous studies (Du et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2022) have identified the influence of these variables on repurchase intention, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding their mediating or moderating effects on brand experience and repurchase intention.

Uniquely, the Thai skincare industry has unique contextual factors that can potentially influence the relationship between the constructs. Firstly, cultural attitudes, sustainability trends, and socioeconomic factors affect consumer behavior (Oe & Yamaoka, 2022), ultimately impacting brand love and repurchasing intention. Secondly, online engagement is another factor that influences customer retention, as the social media preferences of the target audience are essential in creating a personalized and engaging brand experience (Islam et al., 2020). Last, the social identity and reference group in consumer behavior regarding skincare products are critically influenced by socio-economic factors unique to Thailand (Fernandes & Panda, 2019). Empirical research needs to take into consideration the impact of these contextual factors on the relationship between the constructs related to brand performance and customer retention in Thailand.

To bridge the existing knowledge gap and advance scholarly understanding of consumer behavior, this study examines the mediating effects of social factors,

namely social identity, reference groups, and brand love, on consumers' repurchase decisions for skincare products in Thailand. The findings aim to provide new insights for marketers and enrich the theoretical and empirical knowledge of consumer behavior. Additionally, the study seeks to contribute novel insights and refine existing models related to repurchase intention. Finally, the results will provide firms with guidelines on how to prioritize their marketing campaigns.

## Literature review and hypothesis formulation

### Repurchasing intention

Repurchasing intention is a crucial construct in marketing research and consumer behavior, as it is a key predictor of brand loyalty and a brand's long-term success and profitability (Ginting et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2019). The concept development can be traced back to early studies on customer satisfaction and repurchase behavior (Oliver, 1999). Over the years, scholars have continued to explore factors that contribute to repurchasing intention, such as product quality, perceived value, brand image, customer satisfaction, and switching costs (Mulyandi & Tjandra, 2023). Based on Akbar (2009, p. 27), repurchasing intention is defined as *"purchasing additional products or services from the same company, willingness to recommend the company to others, and demonstrating commitment to the company by exhibiting resistance to switching to another competitor."* By understanding and measuring repurchasing intention, companies can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of their marketing efforts

and the quality of their products or services (Srivastava & Kaul, 2016).

Previous studies highlighted several differences between purchase intention and repurchase intention (Hassan et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2022). A significant difference is their focus on the consumer decision-making process. While purchasing intention centers on the initial decision (Zhao et al., 2019), repurchasing intention focuses on repeat purchases after they have experienced products or services (Mulyandi & Tjandra, 2023). As such, variables influencing each may differ, given evolving consumer experiences (Dwei & Giantari, 2022). This allows repurchasing intention to prioritize overall customer experience, including satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Mulyandi & Tjandra, 2023), as opposed to purchasing intention which concentrates on pre-purchase factors (Sanwal & Ullah, 2021).

To be more specific, for purchasing intention, brand image and trust may contribute to the perceived value and risk reduction for first-time buyers (Torres et al., 2019), on the other hand, repurchasing intention might focus more on the direct experience of how brand can foster trust and loyalty, leading to repeat purchases (Nora, 2019). This means that marketers should focus on building trust and fostering customer loyalty through positive customer experiences. Essentially, it becomes clear that personal experience is becoming more significant in repurchasing intention, as customers who have had positive experiences with a brand or product are more likely to be loyal and repurchase the product in the long run (Tian et al., 2022). In this sense, while social factors play critical roles in both purchase and repurchase intention,



their roles and effects might be significantly different given the consumer's evolving experience.

More importantly, recent studies are also shedding light on the vital role of emotional connections (Huang et al., 2020; Ladhari et al., 2020) in shaping repurchasing intention. This emphasizes that cultivating emotional connections reinforces repurchasing intention and brand loyalty among customers. Therefore, studying brands is crucial for understanding consumer behavior and repurchasing intention (Ilyas et al., 2020). This is because brands play a significant role in influencing consumer behavior through reputation, recognition, and trustworthiness (Novitasari et al., 2022). Consumers associate brands with certain characteristics, such as quality, value, and reliability, which affect their repurchasing intention (Mulyandi & Tjandra, 2023). By studying a brand, companies can identify what sets them apart from competitors, improve their branding strategy, and strengthen brand loyalty (Dandis & Al Haj Eid, 2022). Moreover, studying brands assists in predicting consumer behavior and identifying potential problems that may arise (Sivaram et al., 2019). This enables companies to develop branding strategies that align with their target audience's preferences and needs, increasing customer retention rates and attracting new customers (Putri & Yasa, 2022).

Considering their essential roles in fostering satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, the various dimensions of brand experience play a crucial role in encouraging consumers to repurchase products and services from a brand. This study specifically examines how brand experience influences repurchase

intention, with social factors acting as mediators.

## Brand experience

The concept of brand experience was introduced by Holbrook and Hirschman in 1982. Initially, it revolved around how consumers perceived their interactions with a brand. Later, Brakus et al. (2009) described the brand experience as *"subjective, internal consumer responses (Sensation, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by stimuli that are part of a brand's design, identity, packaging, communications, and environment."* According to Brakus et al. (2009), the brand experience encompasses four dimensions, including sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual dimensions. While each of these dimensions plays a distinct role in constituting a positive brand experience, they interact to enhance consumer emotions and engagement toward brand satisfaction, brand trust, and brand loyalty (Joshi & Garg, 2021; Hwang et al., 2021).

Specifically, brand experience theory highlights the essential role of emotions in shaping a consumer's overall perception and behavior toward a brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Shahid et al., 2022). Positive emotions strengthen the bond between consumers and brands, increasing the likelihood of repurchase intentions (Brakus et al., 2009). Since brand experience adopts a multifaceted approach that recognizes consumers interact with brands in diverse ways (Brakus et al., 2009), understanding brand experience dimensions allows companies to tailor their marketing strategies to create more memorable experiences for consumers. Furthermore, as brand experience theory emphasizes the

significance of long-term behavior (Amoroso et al., 2021), companies that align their offerings with consumers' expectations can effectively enhance repurchase intentions (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022).

Similarly, previous research consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between brand experience and repurchase intention, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty (Safeer et al., 2021; Urdea et al., 2021). This endorsed the importance of establishing effective brand experience in developing and maintaining a competitive advantage in a dynamic market (Abdulla et al., 2019). Still, while empirical studies demonstrated a positive association between brand experience and repurchase intention (Shahzad et al., 2019; Han et al., 2019), other studies demonstrate that in real-world settings, additional social factors can potentially mediate this relationship. These factors are such as brand love (Ferreira et al., 2022), social identity (Du et al., 2022), and reference groups (Atmaja & Puspitawati, 2019). As a result, this present study incorporates brand love, social identity, and reference groups as mediating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing repurchase intentions.

## Brand love

Brand love is a hyphenated term that refers to consumers' emotional attachment to a brand (Ahuvia, 2005). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006, p. 81) define brand love as *"the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name"*. They suggested that brand love is a construct useful for explaining post-consumption behavior among satisfied consumers (Carroll &

Ahuvia, 2006). Based on Brakus et al. (2009), brand love comprises cognitive, affective, and conative brand love. Moreover, it encompasses a variety of emotions, behaviors, and thoughts that consumers arrange into a mental prototype (Batra et al., 2012). Rooted in the triangular theory of interpersonal love (Sternberg, 1986), brand love is one of several relationship types that emerge when consumers develop love-like feelings for a brand (Gumparathi & Patra, 2020).

Previous studies have both theoretically and empirically explored the functions of brand love (Wallace et al., 2022; Mittal et al., 2022; Torres et al., 2022) and found that brand love involves more than ensuring quality and durability, as it necessitates a comprehensive approach to evoke positive emotions towards a brand (Palusuk et al., 2019). In particular, repurchasing intention, brand experience, and brand love are essential factors in driving consumer behavior and building successful brands. While brand experiences can lead to a higher level of repurchasing intention (Ferreira et al., 2022), studies also demonstrated that a positive relationship exists between brand experience and brand love (Brakus et al., 2009). This is because positive brand experiences can enhance the emotional connection, familiarity, and trust in a brand, which contributes to brand love (Joshi & Garg, 2021). Collectively, the following hypothesis is put forward:

**H1:** Brand experience positively effects brand love.

**H2:** Brand love positively effects repurchasing intention.

## Social identity





Social identity, as defined by Tajfel (1978), refers to an individual's self-concept formed through an awareness of their membership in or emotional attachment to a social group. Social identity theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into various social groups based on shared characteristics, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, or even brand preference within the context of beauty products (Zeqiri et al., 2022). Consequently, identification with these groups can foster a sense of belonging, enhance self-esteem, and cultivate a shared identity among members, potentially resulting in favoritism toward one's own group and discrimination against outsiders (Allen, 2010). Furthermore, social identity theory suggests that individuals engage in social comparison processes to maintain and boost their self-esteem (Cooper et al., 2021). These comparisons can take the form of either upward or downward comparisons, depending on whether the target of comparison is perceived as superior or inferior to their group identity. Thus, this dynamic nature of social identity plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors, including their consumer decision-making processes in the skincare and beauty products sector (Kang et al., 2020).

Particularly, several studies have found that social identity can influence how consumers perceive brand experiences and how they respond to them in the context of skincare and beauty products (Rather et al., 2022; Lee & Johnson, 2019; Kazmi & Khalique, 2019). These findings highlight the impact of social identity on the relationship between brand experience

and consumer behavior in the skincare and beauty product context. In another study, Chen and Tsai (2020) found that customers with high social identification with a skincare brand demonstrated greater trust, loyalty, and commitment to that brand. This indicates that social identity can significantly influence consumers' repurchasing intentions by shaping their attitudes toward specific beauty brands. Overall, the findings suggest that social identity plays an important role in moderating the relationship between brand experience and repurchasing intention, therefore, the hypothesis for the relationship is proposed as follows:

**H3:** Brand experience positively effects social identity.

**H4:** Social identity positively effects repurchase intention.

## Reference group

Reference groups, as identified by Bapna and Umyarov (2015), are influential individuals or groups that people imitate, and see as experts in a particular field. With increased access to information, individuals connect closer with reference groups such as celebrities and opinion leaders they feel related to (Bilgicer et al., 2015). Hence, these groups significantly impact beliefs and decisions by providing benchmarks for self-evaluation and alignment of behavior (Risselada et al., 2014). Individuals have been observed to often seek recommendations from their associated members of the group they identified themselves to be a part of when making purchase decisions (Atmaja & Puspitawati, 2019). Essentially, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) categorize reference groups by their functions which are informational and normative groups.

Previous research has focused on the interplay between brand experience, reference groups, and repurchase intentions, emphasizing informative and normative influences (Wiedmann et al., 2018). Studies also show that factors like reference groups can influence the relationship between brand experience and repurchase intentions (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018). Similarly, Ghazali et al. (2017) also identify reference groups as sway for skincare repurchasing intentions. Clearly, both studies emphasize reference groups' role where consumers rely on their groups' guidance, particularly when lacking firsthand experience (Ghazali et al., 2017; Bulut & Karabulut, 2018). Additionally, Han and Kim (2020) found that reference groups can contribute to fostering an emotional bond between consumers and the brand, which enhances consumer loyalty toward a brand. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**H5:** Brand experience positively effects reference group.

**H6:** Reference group positively effects repurchasing intention.

## Mediating roles

While previous literature has indicated positive relationships between brand experience and repurchase intention (Safeer et al., 2021; Urdea et al., 2021),

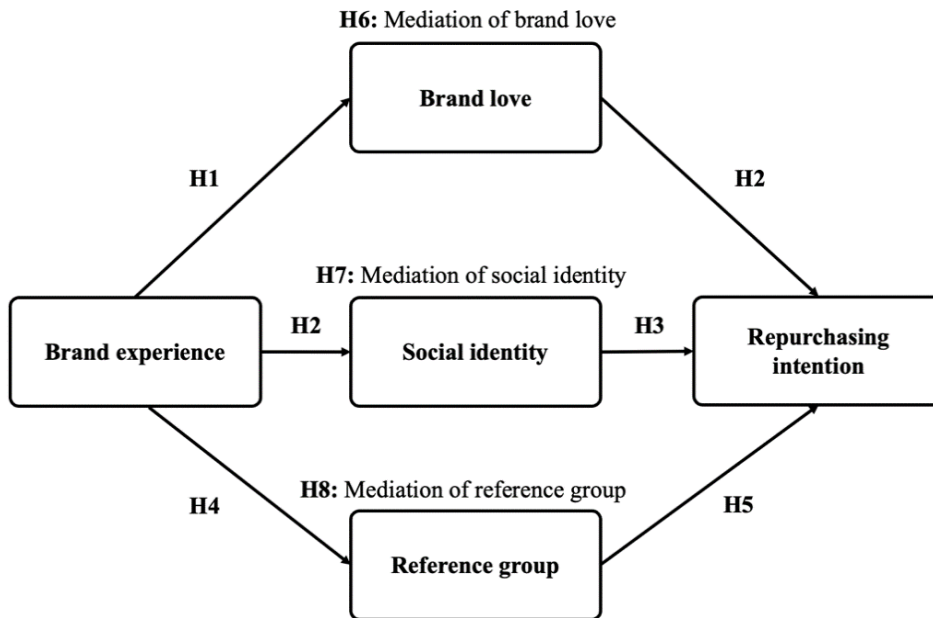
several studies also demonstrated that this relationship can be mediated by other factors such as social identity (Rather et al., 2022; Lee & Johnson, 2019), reference groups (Ghazali et al., 2017; Bulut & Karabulut, 2018), and brand love (Wallace et al., 2022; Mittal et al., 2022). This suggests that repurchase intention is influenced by the interplay of brand experience and emotional bonds. Moreover, Mostafa and Kasamani (2021) underscore the importance of aligning brand experience with personal expectations to foster strong emotional bonds and loyalty, leading to repurchase intention and commitment to a brand (Garg et al., 2015). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are formulated to examine the mediating effect of these emotional and personal factors on the relationship between brand experience and repurchase intention.

**H7:** The effect of brand experience on repurchasing intention is mediated by brand love.

**H8:** The effect of brand experience on repurchasing intention is mediated by social identity.

**H9:** The effect of brand experience on repurchasing intention is mediated by reference group.

From nine hypothesizes, the conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### Data collection

Given that consumer behavior studies often utilize non-probability samples (Landers & Behrend, 2015), this study employ convenience sampling. To address the proposed hypotheses, 500 participants from Thailand aged above 20 who had purchased skin care products within the last 12 months were randomly recruited. The selection of 500 participants for the study ensures a robust sample size, providing a cushion to account for potential data exclusion or incomplete responses. Typically, 400 complete samples are considered optimal for reliable market research analysis (Malhotra et al., 2006). By targeting 500 participants, the study aims to guarantee that, even after filtering out incomplete or

unqualified responses, a minimum of 400 valid samples remains available for analysis.

Participants underwent a self-administered survey approach without interference from the researcher. Each participant could only participate in the survey once, and the survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. All participants voluntarily participated and agreed to the content of the consent form before answering the survey. Participants who indicated that they had not purchased any skincare products in Thailand in the last 12 months were excluded. Moreover, participants who did not complete the questionnaire were also removed. In total, valid responses were collected from 400 participants and marked as completed.





## Measurements development

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each scale item was adapted from prior literature to ensure the content validity of the constructs. Specifically, 10 items related to brand experience were adapted from Brakus et al. (2009), 11 items for social identity were adapted from Wang (2017), 6 items measuring reference groups were adapted from Tajfel (1974), 9 items on brand love were adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), and the measurement for repurchase intention was adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996).

Given that the sample consists of Thai native speakers, the measurement items were translated from English to Thai by two professional translators. This was done to ensure that participants could respond accurately with a clear understanding. Before initiating the primary data collection, a pilot test was conducted with 30 individuals well-acquainted with skincare brands in Thailand. To ensure the reliability of the survey, this study aimed for a Cronbach's alpha score exceeding 0.80 (Hair et al., 2019). Any items not meeting the standard Cronbach's alpha threshold were excluded from this study. Last, the refined survey incorporates 5 general questions designed to gather information on the sample's characteristics. These questions delve into the skincare brands they frequently use, their price range, purchase frequency, preferred shopping methods, and other demographic-related queries. This is in addition to the 42 primary measurement items.

## Data analysis

To analyze the data, this study employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach due to its compatibility in handling the data. As posited by Hair et al. (2011), PLS-SEM proves particularly efficacious in scenarios where sample sizes are small, and the assumption of data normality is not mandatory. The analysis was executed using SmartPLS 4, a software widely utilized by researchers for its ability to manage complex models, especially when the model involves both reflective and formative constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Finally, to validate the robustness of the findings, a bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples was employed with a 95 percent confidence level. Moreover, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), variance inflation factors (VIFs), Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity (FLDV), and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMTs) were also assessed to ensure the robustness of the data.

## Data analysis and results

### Data distribution

Specifically to data, Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics, purchasing behavior, and preferred skincare brands of the study participants. The data reveals that the majority of the sample comprises females (61.25%) between the ages of 20 and 30 (72.25%). Notably, 59.75% of the participants purchase skincare products from physical stores, with a frequency of once a month (51.50%). Last, their average purchase value per bill falls within the range of 101 to 500 baht.

**Table 1** Sample characteristics (N=400)

Demographic and behavior	Frequency	Percent	Cosmetic Brands	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Brands</b>		
Female	245	61.25	Nivea	79	19.75
Male	155	38.75	Vaseline	54	13.50
<b>Age</b>			CeraVe	25	6.25
20 - 29	289	72.25	Eucerin	24	6.00
30 - 39	62	15.50	Garnier	20	5.00
40 - 49	49	12.25	Clear nose	11	2.75
<b>Location</b>			Estee Lauder	9	2.25
Northern Thailand	50	12.50	Olay	8	2.00
Northeastern Thailand	50	12.50	Clarins	7	1.75
Central Thailand	50	12.50	Oriental Princess	7	1.75
Southern Thailand	50	12.50	SK-II	7	1.75
Bangkok	200	50.00	Citra	6	1.50
<b>Place</b>			La mer	6	1.50
Store	239	59.75	Laneige	6	1.50
Online store	80	20.00	Jergens	5	1.25
Social commerce	34	8.50	Johnson & Johnson	5	1.25
Agent	47	11.75	Lancome	5	1.25
<b>Purchase frequency</b>			Chanel	4	1.00
Once a quarter	99	24.75	Clinique	4	1.00
Once a month	206	51.50	Hada Labo	4	1.00
Once a week	19	4.75	Kiehl's	4	1.00
Not often	76	19.00	La Roche Posay	4	1.00
<b>Purchase amount (per product)</b>			Plantnery	4	1.00
Under 100 Bath	29	7.25	Pond	4	1.00
101 – 500 Bath	206	51.50	Artistry	3	0.75
501 – 3,000 Bath	141	35.25	Biotherm	3	0.75
3,001 - 5,000 Bath	24	6.00	Others	82	20.50

The average values for each category range from 3.07 to 4.09, with standard deviations ranging from 0.77 to 0.93 as shown in Table 2. This suggests that the data is relatively consistent and that the responses are clustered around a similar

sentiment or perception. This narrow range of responses also suggests that respondents share a common perspective on these variables. This consistency helps to minimize biases from extreme outliers and disparate group opinions.

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics (N=400)

Mean Variables	Number of Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Experience	10	4.09	0.89
Brand Love	9	3.88	0.77
Reference Group	6	3.37	0.92
Social Identity	10	3.07	0.93
Repurchase Intention	7	3.72	0.88

## Measurement model assessment

The model fit was assessed using the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic (Segars & Grover, 1993) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The results of the PLS-SEM analysis demonstrated a good model fit, with a  $\chi^2$  of 2994.422 ( $p > 0.05$ ) and an SRMR of 0.066. Furthermore, the model's predictive capability and the relationships therein were evaluated using the  $R^2$  value and  $F^2$  (Hair et al., 2019). The resulting  $R^2$  values for each variable are as follows: brand love stands at 0.627 (substantial effect size), reference group at 0.064 (low effect size), social identity at 0.148 (moderate effect size), and repurchase intention at 0.686 (substantial effect size). Regarding  $F^2$ , out of the six relationships, two demonstrated large effect sizes: the relationship between brand experience and brand love (0.312) and the relationship between brand love and repurchase intention (0.322). Hence, three relationships indicated medium effects: the relationship between brand experience and reference group (0.081), the relationship between brand experience and social identity (0.135), and the relationship between social identity and repurchase intention (0.107). Only one relationship, between the reference group and repurchase intention, showed no

effect, with an  $F^2$  value of 0.000. Clearly, the model is robust and places significant emphasis on brand love, while the impact of reference group on repurchase intention is negligible.

To assess the convergent validity of the measurement model, key parameters, including factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) values, were examined as shown in Table 3. The findings confirmed the model's internal consistency and validity since they adhered to the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, all AVE values exceeded 0.5, and CR values consistently met the suggested 0.7 benchmarks (Hair et al., 2019; Matthews et al., 2018).

Moreover, an analysis of variance inflation factors (VIFs) also demonstrated that all values were consistently below 5 (Hair et al., 2011), indicating no multicollinearity concerns within the data (Matthews et al., 2018). Last, as presented in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.897 to 0.968, while CR values (CR Rho\_a and CR Rho\_C) varied between 0.910 and 0.972. Each of these metrics also comfortably exceeded the established 0.7 threshold, suggesting that the study's instruments are reliable and valid, providing a robust foundation for further analyses.

**Table 3** Confirmatory factor analysis results

Construct and Measurement Items	Standardized factor loading >0.7	VIF <5	CA >0.7	CR (Rho_a) >0.7	CR (Rho_C) >0.7	AVE >0.5
<b>Brand Experience</b>			0.918	0.921	0.932	0.603
BE_1	0.735	2.289				
BE_2	0.754	2.659				
BE_3	0.790	2.782				
BE_4	0.812	2.943				
BE_5	0.726	1.716				
BE_7	0.805	2.413				
BE_8	0.803	2.577				
BE_9	0.793	2.569				
BE_10	0.763	1.990				
<b>Brand Love</b>			0.953	0.954	0.960	0.727
BL_1	0.885	3.803				
BL_2	0.864	4.022				
BL_3	0.839	3.524				
BL_4	0.875	4.158				
BL_5	0.846	2.959				
BL_6	0.857	4.004				
BL_7	0.884	3.965				
BL_8	0.820	2.733				
BL_9	0.802	2.386				
<b>Reference Group</b>			0.897	0.910	0.921	0.660
RG_1	0.792	2.917				
RG_2	0.847	3.613				
RG_3	0.841	2.754				
RG_4	0.831	2.147				
RG_5	0.778	2.720				
RG_6	0.781	2.753				
<b>Social Identity</b>			0.937	0.939	0.949	0.729
SI_1	0.829	3.885				
SI_2	0.854	4.258				
SI_3	0.843	3.451				
SI_4	0.905	4.992				
SI_5	0.886	4.092				
SI_6	0.871	3.988				
SI_7	0.913	4.389				
SI_8	0.917	4.945				
SI_9	0.889	4.118				
SI_10	0.885	4.802				
<b>Repurchase Intention</b>			0.968	0.971	0.972	0.774
RP_1	0.847	2.904				
RP_2	0.866	3.187				
RP_3	0.863	3.215				
RP_4	0.884	3.700				
RP_5	0.875	3.673				
RP_6	0.877	3.653				
RP_7	0.756	2.080				

To assess discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT analysis were also employed to ensure that construct measures were not simply reflections of each other (Henseler et al., 2015). Overall, the analysis as shown in Table 4 revealed that the square roots of the AVEs surpassed the inter-correlations

between the latent variables, while Table 5 demonstrated that all values are below the threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015), indicating the discriminant validity of the reflective constructs. Collectively, the results of both convergent and discriminant validity demonstrate the adequacy of the model.

**Table 4** Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity criteria

	BE	BL	RG	RI	SI
Brand Experience (BE)	0.776				
Brand Love (BL)	0.801	0.853			
Reference Group (RG)	0.283	0.361	0.812		
Repurchase Intention (RI)	0.628	0.721	0.435	0.854	
Social Identity (SI)	0.316	0.456	0.663	0.563	0.880

**Table 5** HTMT discriminant validity criteria

	BE	BL	RG	RI	SI
Brand Experience (BE)					
Brand Love (BL)	0.845				
Reference Group (RG)	0.294	0.379			
Repurchase Intention (RI)	0.664	0.761	0.466		
Social Identity (SI)	0.321	0.471	0.710	0.589	

## Structural model and hypotheses testing

To assess the significance of the path coefficients, the structural model was evaluated using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples. The analysis (Table 6) revealed that, at a 95% confidence interval (Hair et al., 2019), five of the six hypothesized relationships were supported. Among the supported hypotheses, brand experience exhibited a

strong effect on brand love ( $\beta = 0.801$ ), and brand love subsequently exhibited a strong effect on repurchase intention ( $\beta = 0.583$ ). Next, brand experience also demonstrated a moderate effect on social identity ( $\beta = 0.316$ ), while social identity also demonstrated a moderate effect on repurchase intention ( $\beta = 0.265$ ). Still, while brand experience showed a positive effect on reference group ( $\beta = 0.283$ ), the relationship between reference group and repurchase intention was insignificant.

**Table 6** Structural Equation Model Results

Hypothesis	B	STDEV	t	P	Result
H1: Brand Experience -> Brand Love	0.801	0.018	44.422	0.000	Supported
H2: Brand Love -> Repurchase Intention	0.583	0.047	12.363	0.000	Supported
H5: Brand Experience -> Social Identity	0.316	0.045	7.022	0.000	Supported
H6: Social Identity -> Repurchase Intention	0.265	0.051	5.197	0.000	Supported
H3: Brand Experience -> Reference Group	0.283	0.050	5.616	0.000	Supported
H4: Reference Group -> Repurchase Intention	0.049	0.053	0.932	0.351	<b>Not supported</b>

Finally, the mediating effect was examined by using a bootstrapping approach with bias correction at a 95% confidence interval (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results of the analysis, as shown in Table 7, affirmed the mediation effects of brand love and social identity between brand experience and repurchase

intention ( $\beta = 0.467$  and  $\beta = 0.057$ , respectively). On the contrary, the mediation effect of reference group between brand experience and repurchase intention was not supported. This is in line with the above analysis (Table 6) which suggested that reference group does not have an effect on repurchase intention.

**Table 7** Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	B	STDEV	t	P	Result
H7: Brand Experience -> Brand Love -> Repurchase Intention	0.467	0.041	11.391	0.000	Supported
H8: Brand Experience -> Social Identity -> Repurchase Intention	0.084	0.021	3.969	0.000	Supported
H9: Brand Experience -> Reference Group -> Repurchase Intention	0.014	0.016	0.872	0.383	<b>Not supported</b>

## Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on how personal and emotional factors, such as brand love, social identity, and reference groups, shape Thai consumer's repurchase decisions regarding skincare products. It becomes evident that while group validation fosters initial purchase intention, it does not influence repurchase intention. Instead, consumers tend to prioritize personal experience in driving repurchase decisions.

To begin with, this study reinforces the concept of brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), which emphasizes that positive brand experiences foster an intense emotional attachment, leading to brand love. A brand that succeeds in cultivating a deep level of affection with its consumers enhances their emotional attachment and loyalty (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017). This relationship also demonstrates that positive brand experiences transform purchasing decisions from mere transactional interactions into a reflection of aligned





values and emotional gratification (Otero & Wilson, 2018). Once consumers develop this deep affection for a brand, their emotional bond becomes resilient, making them more likely to repurchase products from the brand even in the face of competing offerings or minor product setbacks (Khan et al., 2020).

Building upon the emotional foundation of brand love lies the concept of social identity. Social identity encapsulates a deeply internalized sense of belonging and self-concept that influences purchasing decisions on skincare products (Xi et al., 2022). Brands that seamlessly integrate into a consumer's social identity by resonating with their core values, beliefs, and aspirations can enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations when choosing skincare products (Xi et al., 2022; Balamoorthy & Chandra, 2023). This is because brands that align with an individual's self-concept transcend mere products to become a reflection of who they believe they are or aspire to be (Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016). Evidently, brands that align with an individual's self-concept can create a deeper emotional bond which heightens the consumer's commitment to buy more products from the brand.

Conversely, reference groups exert their influence on a more external level. The influence of reference groups is exceptionally strong during the initial stages of brand discovery and the first purchase (Afifah et al., 2022). This is because reference groups offer opinions and behaviors that consumers might respect or emulate, acting as external validators for products or brands with which consumers are unfamiliar (Rahmi et al., 2016). However, the influence of reference groups holds primarily when

firsthand experience is insufficient (Dalziel & De Klerk, 2021). In this sense, as consumers gain firsthand experience with a product or brand, the weight of the reference group's opinion begins to diminish, allowing personal experience to take precedence in repurchase decisions (Alan et al., 2016; Kim & Yang, 2020). This shift aligns with cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), which suggests that as consumers progress through their purchase journey, they may encounter a dissonance between their initial decisions and contrasting information arising from their own experiences, such as unsatisfying product quality. This discomfort propels them to seek affirmation from their own interactions with the products and brands, ultimately making the personal experience the dominant factor guiding repurchase decisions, thereby overshadowing the influence of reference groups.

Overall, the repurchase journey of skincare products for Thai consumers demonstrates a shift from external influences towards deep personal considerations. While reference groups play a crucial role in initial purchase decisions, their influence diminishes as consumers gain firsthand experience. Instead, personal values, emotional bonds, and social identity emerge as more essential forces in driving repurchase decisions. Collectively, this emphasizes the importance of brand alignment with an individual's self-concept in driving repurchase intention rather than mere advertising.

## Contribution to the literature

This study provides an intricate examination of the Thai skincare market,



bringing forth a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between brand love, social identity, and reference groups in influencing repurchase decisions. This study affirmed the pivotal role of brand love, demonstrating that fostering deep emotional connections with consumers elevates purchasing decisions from mere transactions to emotionally resonant experiences that reflect shared values.

Moreover, this research sheds new light on the concept of social identity, highlighting its influence on purchase decisions in the Thai context. Brands that seamlessly align with consumers' core beliefs and aspirations become integral to their self-concept, transcending mere products to become reflections of their perceived identity. This alignment between brand and consumer social identity, hence, fosters a strong sense of commitment to repurchase products from the brand.

A significant contribution of this study lies in its delineation of the influence exerted by reference groups. While these groups hold sway during the initial discovery and purchase phase, their influence diminishes as consumers gain firsthand product experience. This deviation from Western-centric literature which underscores the Thai skincare market's unique context, where personal considerations surpass external validation. The emphasis shifts to a brand's alignment with an individual's self-concept, surpassing the impact of mere advertising or endorsements.

## Implications for practice

In the dynamic world of the skincare industry, understanding the nuances of consumer repurchase decisions is crucial.

Success goes beyond creating an appealing brand image, which may influence initial purchases but fails to build lasting loyalty. Instead, companies must prioritize retaining customers who have already engaged with their brand, preventing them from being lured away by competitors. To achieve this, managers can implement a series of strategic initiatives that evoke all four senses of brand experiences, sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual, to achieve a desired outcome.

First, it is essential to create skincare products that delight the senses. When consumers unbox a product, the way it feels, smells, and even the sound of the packaging opening can make a significant difference. From the tactile pleasure of finely milled powder to the subtle fragrance of moisturizer, these sensory experiences are crucial. By ensuring that every element of the product experience reflects quality and authenticity, consumers are more likely to develop an emotional connection. Such emotional connections are the foundation of trust in brand love which have been shown to foster repeated purchases. Clearly, by meticulously crafting these sensory details to enhance experiences, they evoke positive emotions and memorable moments that consumers associate with the brand, thereby fostering a deep emotional connection that nurtures brand love.

Second, the emotional aspect revolves around evoking positive feelings of target audience. Brands can capitalize on social identity by promoting empowerment, confidence, inclusivity, and diversity in both product range and marketing campaigns. Such narratives resonate deeply when consumers see the skincare



brand as an extension or enhancement of their self-concept. To further align with consumers' self-concept, brands should engage in deep market research to uncover the intrinsic values and aspirations of their audience, allowing for a more targeted and meaningful connection that reflects back on the consumer's own identity. This helps customers feel a sense of belonging and validation. When a skincare brand resonates with personal identity, repurchases become emotional decisions intertwined with self-affirmation.

Third, managers should emphasize proactive consumer engagement through collaborative efforts, whether with limited-edition releases or influencers who can authentically showcase the product's application and benefits. This initial influence of reference groups presents a tactical opportunity to visualize the experiential nature of skincare products. By strategically selecting influencers whose personas and values align with the target audience, brands can create a more authentic and resonant narrative that consumers see as an extension of their own social identity. Consequently, this ignites excitement and a sense of community because as consumers see their peers or admired individuals engaging with a brand, they are inclined to do the same. As a result, this creates an influential cascade, where the actions of some serve as cues for many, underscoring the vital role of reference groups in the purchase process.

Last, the consistent quality of skincare products alone. Instead, managers should engage consumers to understand the story and thoughtful process behind product development, ingredient choices, and packaging decisions. This can excite them

with intellectual insights and promote a strong emotional bond. When users grasp the ethos behind a brand's offerings, it amplifies trust and loyalty, making them advocates. However, given the direct skin contact and the promise of enhancement, any compromise can lead to immediate distrust. Managers must institute rigorous quality control measures, ensuring that each product batch adheres to the promised standards. This is crucial, as the study suggests that consumers will lean heavily on their personal experience with the product when deciding on repurchases.

Overall, by harmoniously intertwining these dimensions, skincare brands can create a holistic brand experience that envelops the consumer at every interaction. As Thai consumers go through these layers of brand experiences, the convergence of sensory allure, emotional connections, active engagements, and intellectual insights amplifies brand love, solidifies alignment with their social identity, and reinforces the potency of reference group influences.

## **Limitations and future research directions**

While this study provides insights into the Thai skincare market, it has limitations. One key limitation is its focus on only the Thai market, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to other cultural contexts. For instance, consumer behaviors in other Asian countries like China or South Korea might be different due to their distinct cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the skincare industry is constantly changing due to shifts in trends and consumer preferences. As a result, the



findings from this study might need to be updated to stay relevant over time.

Considering these limitations, future research should consider a broader sample that encompasses multiple cultures. It would be valuable to understand how brands in different Asian countries establish emotional connections with their consumers and how these relationships influence repurchase decisions. A recommended method for future studies would be conducting in-depth interviews with both merchants and consumers to further explore the values and factors influencing their decisions. Such an approach allows for a deeper examination of consumer-brand relationships, unveiling the underlying motivations, preferences, and the complexity of value perception that play a pivotal role in purchase and repurchase decisions.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals how distinctive contextual factors in the Thai

skincare industry, such as cultural attitudes and social considerations, modify established relationships found in the literature primarily from the Western context. This unique context redefines the dynamics of brand love, social identity, and reference groups, challenging the applicability of traditional brand development approaches. While advertisements influence consumers to make their initial purchases, brand experience plays a pivotal role in establishing customer engagement and building an emotional bond that leads to enduring loyalty and commitment to a skincare brand. Hence, it is evident that Thai consumers are strongly influenced by their personal experiences when making repurchasing decisions. A brand that fails to establish a strong relationship or provide adequate after-sales services cannot secure its customer base. Last, this study also offers both scholarly and managerial implications for those interested in delving deeper into understanding Thai consumer behavior regarding skincare.

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